

"when you're crazy," I went on. "You always think you're a King or something. How jolly!"
"Poor unfortunates!" said Thomas, just like his mother.
"Everybody's crazy," I said, "about something."
"You knock against the subject accidentally, and—bang! there's an explosion."
"There's never been any in my family," said Thomas seriously.
"Of course," I said sweetly. "That explains why you're what you are."
"Well, I don't know," said Thomas deprecatingly.
"Is there ever any in yours?" he asked, very offhand.
"Pancy how I jumped at the chance! Only my grandfather and two of my aunts," I said carelessly.
Thomas started.
"Isn't it funny? It is said they were always worse by moonlight," I added.
An expression of horror overspread his foolish face, and he moved away a little.
I made my eyes big and stared up at the moon. "I don't see anything unnatural about the cow jumping over it," I murmured.
"I think we'd better go below," said Thomas quickly.
"It's getting very damp."
So I was saved for that night! How I hugged myself!

BUT that didn't help matters in the other direction at all. In the mornings Thomas and his father lay down late, and I found, if I went up on deck when Mrs. Bunting was starting breakfast in the galley, I could usually find French Straker there. He used to get up at an unearthly hour and go for a long swim. He was a splendid swimmer. He wouldn't go in with us. I am not so bad in the water myself; but he never noticed my performances. When I came on deck his cheeks would be pink and his eyes bright just to be alive in the early morning. You think I'm foolish. Dear, but he made me think of the swimming creatures we imagined at noon. He wore his old working clothes as if they were a suit of armor.
At such moments he was almost human, and would look at me as if I were a person. But at the first approach of any real friendliness between us he would look like a scurvy herring, and then look as if he had been guilty of an awful wrong, making me feel as flat as paper patterns on a writing board.
I suppose you'll say it was a judgment on me. In time I had never been denied anything I wanted, excepting much—and that was because I wanted it so much. By night he followed me to that extent I thought I must surely begin to notice him—but I couldn't. When he was in sight I was uninterested because he didn't notice me; but when he was out of sight I was perfectly wretched because I imagined he was writing to some other girl, or looking tenderly at her picture. I was sure he carried some girl's picture in his pocketbook, he was so careful of it. How I hate girls, whatever she was!



I Was So Happy
the Harbor Spun
Round and Round.

in my head like hymns of joy. No sooner had French sat down to his oars than he saw the pocketbook, and with a sharp look at me pounced on it. But my face was as innocent as a babe's.

I found I could look at him now without its hurting me inside. I seemed to have got myself back again, after having had some crazy girl's head by mistake. Do you know that rapturous feeling? And of course I wanted to tease him to pay him back—just a little. And I did! There are so many ways to tease a man! In spite of his stony face, I knew it hurt. And I was glad.

The next thing I had to do was to solve the mystery. Why did he treat me so, when he was carrying my picture around? Well, I found out, and I learned at the same time that it's not safe to play with a real man—when you care yourself, I mean. He made me very sorry for it.

WHEN we were still at Solomons one night we were asked to a party on another yacht. At the last moment I developed a headache, and the Buntings were obliged to go without me. I did have an ache; but it was in my heart—I already had my fill of teasing French.

After they got safely away I came up on deck. He was in the bow with his guitar. I called him back and made him sit beside me. He didn't try to come close like that idiotic Thomas.

"It was so hot below I couldn't stand it," I said, which was quite true.

For the first time he seemed to have lost his confident air. His eyes looked soft in the moonlight. I had to keep mine hidden for fear of showing too much.

"I'm sorry you're not well," he said awkwardly.

I was as well as well could be then; but I didn't say so. "Sing something," I said.

He shook his head. "I have no voice tonight," he said in a low tone.

I answered with the obvious thing. "You never do anything to please me!" Saying it to him sounded horribly flat.

"I'll tell you a story," he said, putting down the guitar.

"With lots of adventures?" I said. I didn't want to be flippant; but I couldn't help it.

He shook his head again. "This is a problem story," he said, "and you must supply the answer."

My heart began to beat like anything; for I guessed he was going to talk about us.

"Once upon a time there was a fellow," he began,

"and he was as poor as Job's turkey—"

"Good!" I said. "I like to have the hero poor in the beginning."

"This isn't a hero," he said quickly; "an ordinary sort of fellow. He was so poor he couldn't give himself a decent education. And there was a rich man came along and offered to lend him the money to go through college, without any security. You see, the fellow couldn't work himself through, because he was taking

THE RIVALS

BY JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

